

The Tree of Time by TheRealSokka

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: Dialogue-Only, Friendship, Gen, Happiness with a smidge of sad

Language: English

Characters: Dustin Henderson, Eleven | Jane Hopper, Lucas Sinclair, Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Mike Wheeler, Steve Harrington, Will Byers

Relationships: Will Byers & Eleven | Jane & Dustin Henderson & Maxine Mayfield & Lucas Sinclair & Mike Wheeler, steve & everyone

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Summary:

So much can happen in a few years.

Time is unpredictable, but the future is nothing to be scared of. Not when the Hawkins Party have each other. Even though, at the beginning, they had no idea what would happen to them over the years. Or who.

The Tree of Time

Author's Note:

Idea came, saw, and wrote itself. And for some reason decided to make this a first dialogue-only fic. Oh well.

But seriously, I'm really happy with this one. Hope you guys like it, too. It should be relatively clear who is speaking at any point.

"First! Beat you again, Byers!"

"Oh come on; it's not fair! Your legs are longer..."

"Haha. Sure. Wanna go again?"

"No; it's no fun when you keep winning."

"It's not about winning; it's about the competition!"

"What does that even mean? Is that one of your dad's sayings?"

... "No."

"Aha."

"Shut up. Race you to the quarry?"

"That's like a mile!"

"Scared you'll lose?"

"No, I just – hey, I've got a better idea! How about first one up there?"

"Up where?"

"There."

“Up *there*?”

“Yeah.”

“That’s really high...”

“Scared you’ll lose?”

“Oh, you’re on now! Go on three? One, two...”

“Three!”

“Hey! Get back here!”

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“Why aren’t you coming, Mike?”

“... I don’t think I like climbing.”

“Oh.”

“Shit!”

“No, don’t look down. Here, just take that branch and put your foot there.”

“I don’t think I can...”

“Course you can.”

“Uh...”

“Hey! I can see your house from here!”

“Really?”

“Come up and see.”

“Hgrshateclimingandyou.”

“What?”

“Nothing. Shit, dontlookdowndontlookdown.”

“You’ve got it. Gimme your hand; there’s room. Yeah, there you go!”

“Woah!”

“Hm?”

“This is amazing!”

“Hmhm.”

“You can see so far! And the houses are so small – how were you up so fast? Have you done this before?”

“We live surrounded by trees, Mike.”

“Oh. Fair enough.”

“Hey.”

“What?”

“Beat you.”

“Aw, come on, that wasn’t fair; you were – stop smiling!”

“No.”

“I’m ignoring you.”

“Hihi.”

... “Will?”

“Yeah?”

“How do you get *down*?”

an indefinite amount of time later:

“Phew. Solid ground. I’m never doing that again.”

“You said you liked it.”

“Must have been madness of the moment. All the king’s men won’t get me back on that tree.”

“Oh. Okay. Maybe – think about it? I thought it was nice.”

“Don’t look at me like that! I’m not...” ... “Ugh, fine. Maybe.”

“Thanks!”

“I’m gonna regret that. You know what we should do, though? We should leave our names in the tree.”

“What? Why?”

“People do that; they carve their initials into places where they’ve been.”

“They do?”

“Yeah. And in the meantime, everyone knows they’ve been there.”

“But we’re not famous or anything. Why would anyone care if we’ve been here?”

“Fine; then it’s just for us, as a reminder that we were up there. And when we come back, even years later, our names’ll still be there. Like a secret. And it’ll keep growing.”

... “I like that.”

“Yeah, me too.”

“How do we do that?”

“Hold on... aha! That should be sharp enough. Let me just – yeah, see? There’s my M.”

“Looks wavy.”

“I dare you to do better.”

“Watch.”

“Hey, how about you make yours below mine? So the M balances on top of the W?”

“Perfectly balanced. That’s like it was meant to be. Let me just... See? Not wavy at all.”

“Yeah, yeah, okay. Hey, now it really looks like our secret sign. Like a rune or something. And it says ‘Mike and Will were here’.”

“Cool.”

“Yeah.”

“Do you think we’ll ever find this again?”

4 years later...

“Phew. Guys, wait up.”

“How are you out of breath?! We’ve barely gone a mile!”

“You can’t be serious! How gigantic is this forest?! Couldn’t we just do this in your backyard, Will?”

“Um, yeah, but...”

“It’s not camping when you’ve got a house right there! It needs to be in the woods.”

“Says who?”

“Says logic.”

“That logic is fucked up. I think I’ve got a blister.”

“Don’t be a pussy.”

“It’s called being practical, thank you very much...”

“Practical? I’m even carrying all the stuff...”

“Ugh. Let’s just look for a good place to set up, Will. If we don’t stop soon, they will go on all night. Whose idea was this, anyway?”

“Yours, I think.”

“I regret ever mentioning camping. Why do I have these ideas?”

“Well, you’re the idea guy. It’s kind of your – hey, look!”

“What? What am I looking at?”

“The tree! Don’t you recognize it?”

“What – wait. Is that *the* tree?! Where are the...?”

“There!”

“Mike and Will were here’!”

“You can still read it!”

“I completely forgot about this.”

“You were right, though. Years later.”

“Guys!”

“Guys! Come here!”

“... telling you; nothing poisonous in this forest!”

“Oh yeah? I found a book in the library says 15 types of snakes slither around down here.”

“Maybe you should sleep in the trees then.”

“I will enjoy your screams down below.”

“Guys! Listen for one second.”

“What?”

“We’ve found our camp site.”

“Thank Lord in Heaven!”

“What? Why here, Mike? I don’t see a clearing.”

“Look. You see this tree?”

“Yeah... what kind of mark is that?”

“Ours.”

“Huh? Did you just scratch that into the tree?”

“No, we did that so long ago! So much happened, and this is still here.”

“And we’re still friends.”

“Exactly, Will! It’s so cool that we found this again.”

“Okay, hold up. You two made your secret friendship memo, and we weren’t invited?”

“It was like, years ago! We didn’t even know you back then.”

“Wow. Thanks, friend. That was the last time I lent you my X-Men comic.”

“Dude, come on. Hey, there’s still room; why don’t you...?”

“Oh, and now he wants to bribe us!”

“Well, if so, I’ll be bribed. Where can I put my signature?”

“Seriously, man?!”

“There’s no way I’m missing out on the friendship-tree!”

“This is so childish – but I call first shot!”

“Guys, there’s plenty room for both your L and D. Do you have your knife, Lucas – of course you do.”

“Always prepared, guys.”

“Hurry up; I want to leave my mark for posterity, too!”

“Where do you even get these phrases from...?”

“Professional secret.”

“That is the worst D I’ve ever seen...”

“Dude. You literally just needed to connect two lines; give me some credit!”

“Makes me wonder what will have happened by the time we come here next.”

“Me too.” ... “You think we’ll all still be here then?”

“Of course we will, Will! What kind of question is that?!”

“It’s just – so much can happen in a few years.”

“Guess we’ll have to go camping more often, then.”

“Hell no; I veto that! But there’s another thing we can do. Ahem: I solemnly swear that as long as these letter remain in this tree, our friendship will endure. Ever and always.”

“The average life-expectancy of a black Indiana pine tree is roughly 35 years. Just so you know.”

“Shut up, Lucas.”

2 years later

“Hey.”

“Hey.”

“I thought I’d find you here.”

“Hm.”

“I was worried. Everyone was.”

“Yeah, everyone worries so much about me. It’s great.”

“You’re not really that bitter. I know you better than that.”

... “Sometimes I don’t think I know myself anymore.”

“Hey. Talk to me, please. I want to help.”

“You all just want to help. Maybe I don’t want to be helped. Maybe I just want to be left alone. All this worry; it’s suffocating, Mike.”

“Do you want me to leave?”

“No. Please, stay.”

“Always.”

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“Is that why you come out here?”

“To get away from it all? Yeah, maybe.”

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“It’s been a while since you made a campaign.”

“Well... I didn’t have any ideas.”

“Mike. You always have ideas.”

“Urgh. I’ve tried, Will. But... Don’t laugh, please – but whatever I write, it keeps coming back to the lost princess. I make up stories how we find her and save her from the monster. I even wrote a happy ending once.”

“I’m sorry, Mike.”

“Fine paladin I am, right? In reality, I just stood there and watched. We all did.”

“There was nothing you could do.”

“But I *should* have been able to do something...”

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“I wish I could have met her.”

“Yeah. Me too.”

.....

“Look at it. The letters are still exactly the same.”

“A bit older. Maybe a little worn.”

“Hah! Isn’t that a perfect metaphor?”

“What’s on your mind?”

“You remember how we used to wonder what would happen until we saw these letters the next time? And then – all this happened.”

“Yeah. Not quite what we expected, amiright?”

“I’m scared of the future, Mike.”

“Oh - then let’s change that! I bet you we can make this a great year if we try. Starting now: I’ve had the perfect idea for Halloween yesterday.”

“You’re planning for that already?”

“Just started. I’ve got the perfect set of costumes for us this time. How do you feel about catching ghosts?”

“I like where this is going.”

“Right?”

7 months later

“So this is what you dragged us out here for? Some old tree?”

“You have to look closer. Do you see the letters there near the ground?”

... “Oh my God, really. What is this; the great tree of friendship or something?”

“Yeah.”

“Yeah.”

“Yeah.”

“Yeah.”

“Oh Jesus. You know, it’s really creepy when you do that; it’s like you’ve got a hive mind when you start saying stuff at the exact same time.”

“Great minds think alike.”

“Sure, Stalker, sure.”

“There’s no empiric evidence that humans can develop a connection like that. We just happen to get each other!”

“Speak for yourself there, Dustin.”

“Hi-ve mind?”

“It’s like when multiple minds are connected to each other. Like that monster that you sealed in the portal.”

“No, no; not like that! We’ve got a *nice* connection, El!”

“This is getting more scientific by the minute. Nice work, Mike.”

“Dude. We dealt with an interdimensional mind-monster, and you’re talking about scientific accuracy? That shit kind of puts things into perspective.”

“A great man once said: ‘The good scientist is discernible by his accuracy under pressure’.”

“Dustin, your Science teacher has probably never done anything under pressure. How would he know?”

“I refute that statement! Mr. Clark is knowledgeable and wise!”

“Hmph. Still a teacher.”

“Aanyway...”

“We just thought you might- uh- like to join us, maybe? You’re officially part of the group now, and...”

“...only if she takes that about Mr. Clarke back.”

“...You’re serious? I mean; uhm, this, this is really, really childish...”

“Go ahead, Max. You earned it.”

“I – thanks.”

“*Will, am I wrong or was that an emotion from our redhead?*”

“Shush.”

“Hey, we’ve got a problem here. I’ve already got an M there; how do we tell ourselves apart?”

“That’s easy, Wheeler. Did you see me sign any of my top scores with ‘Maxine’?”

“Any of my top scores”; Jesus. So smug. You know, I will beat those one day.”

“We’ve all got our dreams, right?”

“I’m seriously having second thoughts about allowing her near that tree, Mike.”

“I think it’s too late for that, man.”

“MadMax was here.”

“Luckily we’ve just got the female version with us, or I don’t think this forest would still be standing.”

“Female version?”

“Okay, that movie is next on the bucket list!”

“Hey, uh, El? Could you – ah, make your sign next to mine?”

“Sweeeeethearts!”

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“Mike, stop strangling him. It’s not appropriate.”

“Uhm. Is it okay?”

“11. Nice.”

“Why do these two get to have the coolest insignia?!”

“Cause we are just cool like that. Right, El?”

“Bitchin cool.”

“You said it.”

3 weeks later

“Guys, really. Where are we going?”

“It’s a surprise.”

“Can I at least take this ridiculous thing off?!”

“That would ruin the surprise.”

“Ouch!”

“Watch out. There’s a tree root.”

“Thanks, dipshit, I noticed. Why am I here?!”

“Patience. All will be revealed soon.”

“I don’t know if you knew, but I’ve got better things to do than hike into nowhere with you little shits. Nancy wanted to see a movie...”

“We know. She agreed that our mission was more important.”

... “I hate all of you.”

“No you don’t, Stevie. You love us.”

“Grmbbrekhxr.”

“Woah there, Mike! Why are we stopping?”

“Yeah, what’s the hold-up?”

.... “Look...”

“Oh.”

“What the...?!”

“Where is...?”

“Shit.”

“Gone?”

“What’s gone? Why – okay, screw this; I’m taking this off! Anyone care to – hey, what’s up with all of you? You look like someone just murdered your grandmother!”

... “Not even a stump left...”

“Okay; if this is the Mind Flayer’s work, that asshole better prepare itself!”

“Don’t be ridiculous, Dustin. It was probably just the storm.”

“Is this a bad omen now? Are we all gonna hate each other in a second?”

“Don’t be ridiculous, Max. That will never happen.”

“Kidding. But seriously; what now?”

“We could find another one...”

“It wouldn’t be the same.”

“Agreed.”

“Yeah.”

“But Steve never even got the chance! How are we gonna make him a fully-fledged member now?”

“Woah, hold up...”

“I can’t believe this. After all these years...”

“This doesn’t change anything! It’s just letters. I – I don’t need a tree to tell me you’re my friends.”

“Oh; dammit Byers! Don’t get emotional here.”

... “I don’t mind emotional, man.”

“I don’t either. Together into the unknown, right? Let’s figure this out.”

“Friends.”

“Ah, fuck it. Group hug!”

“NoNoNo! Let go of me!”

“Not a chance, Steve.”

“*Sigh*. Well, I see you seem to be doing okay after all. So, just to be clear – you dragged me out here, just so I could graffiti a tree? Did I understand that correctly?”

“It was supposed to be a great ceremony and everything! We even got you a brand new shiny nail-bat...”

... “You are all bananas. You know that, right?”

“And you hang out with us. What does that make you?”

“Devoted? Responsible? Insane?”

“Yep.”

“Glad we cleared that up.”